

## THE SEPTUAGINT READING OF SAMSON CYCLE\*

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1. *The Old Greek of Judges*

The many faces of Samson in the Hebrew Bible according to the successive redactions of this section in the book of Judges 13–16 have recently been emphasized by Witte (2000), Niditch (1990), Jonker (1992), O'Connell (1996), Amit (1999), Lemardelé (2005), and by J. Cheryl Exum in this Conference. They reflect diverse interpretations of this ambiguous figure of the saga as Nazarite, saviour, charismatic leader, and Yahweh's servant and judge within the deuteronomistic and priestly theology. Other faces can be drawn by approaching this figure from different methodological perspectives. The effort to integrate Samson in the salvation's history did not end with the establishment of the canon. The reception's history provides new faces of Samson as prophet and virtuous hero in Josephus, as paradigm of faith in the Letter to the Hebrews, as *typos* of Christ in some of the Fathers since Origen (Houtman & Spronk 2004; Gunn 2005).<sup>1</sup>

My aim is to focus on the interpretation of the Septuagint, that is, the Old Greek within the framework of the Hellenistic Judaism, when the Hellenistic Jewish authors recreated the heroes of Israel's past in different ways (Fernández Marcos 1975), and before its reception in later Judaism: Josephus, Pseudo-Philo, Rabbinic Judaism, and Christianity: the infancy narratives of the Gospels and the Letter to the Hebrews, the Fathers, or even Samson as thinker of Milton's *Samson Agonistes* (Crenshaw 1992).

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<sup>1</sup> Samson as *typos* of Jesus is not very common among the Fathers. Some isolated passages of the cycle are interpreted allegorically as 15:16–19 (Harl, Dorival & Munnich 1988, 304–305). But Samson bound and miraculously liberated, as it happens in 15:14, is interpreted as a *typos* of Jesus dead and resurrected by B. Arias Montano: *O quam vere, quam apte, quam expresse immortalem Christi virtutem et efficacitatem immortalibus atque redivivis membris, hac imagine expressam intuemur, si mysteria revelare iam tempus esset! Adsit clavis David et aperiat quod praeterea nec aperire, nec claudere quispiam potest alius* (Arias Montano 1592, 540).

In order to restore Samson's description in the Old Greek (OG), my approach to the text is based on previous studies of the text history of the book such as those of Pretzl, Billen, Schreiner, Soisalon-Soininen, Bodine, Targarona, Lindars and myself (Lindars 1987; Fernández Marcos 2005). Rahlfs printed in his *editio minor* (Stuttgart 1935) a double text for Judges, the text of *codex Alexandrinus* and the text of *codex Vaticanus* in the upper and lower part of the page, apparently considering these texts two different translations. Nowadays, there is a scholarly consensus that the group of manuscripts that includes the *codex Vaticanus* transmits the *kaivge* revision in the book of Judges, and the group of manuscripts including *codex Alexandrinus*, the Hexaplaric recension. The Old Greek has been best preserved in the Lucianic or Antiochene recension (mss. Kglmw + dpt of Brooke/McLean's edition), especially when it is followed by the Old Latin (Bodine 1980, esp. 134–136).<sup>2</sup>

In the last decades, some work has been done on the Greek texts of Judges compared with the Masoretic Text (MT), but these studies have generally focused on a word by word analysis in a rather atomistic way.

Having established and defined the OG with a reasonable degree of certainty, my second purpose consists in considering this text in its own right, seeking the coherence of the narrative in Greek, that is, the end-product as compared with the account in the source language. Looking for the architectural narrative of the translation may be a risky task, but it is in no way an impossible one, provided that all the elements present in the process of translation are considered. Recently several contributions have insisted on a scholarly milieu as the primary setting for Biblical translations in Antiquity (Van der Kooij 1998 and 1999).<sup>3</sup> My interest is, thus, to highlight what has been retained, what has been lost and what has been transformed in the process of translation, by making an accurate comparison between the Masoretic Text and the Old Greek. Although I sympathize at a deep level with the orientation of *La Bible d'Alexandrie*, but my approach is slightly different. I shall not insist so much on the reception of the Septuagint, but rather on the translation itself at the first level of the encounter with the source language.

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<sup>2</sup> For the restoration of the Old Greek it is necessary to consult the Antiochene recension transmitted by this group of manuscripts in Brooke/McLean's edition.

<sup>3</sup> See also N. Fernández Marcos, 'The Greek Pentateuch and the Scholarly Milieu of Alexandria,' *The Jeremie Lecture*, Cambridge 2008. Concretely for the translation of Judges, Lindars asserts: '... the scholars were concerned with the meaning of the text, and not only with its formal relation to MT. The LXX Judges existed for the benefit of those who could not read Hebrew, and it had to make sense,' (Lindars 1986, 193).

The translation of Judges since Thackeray (1909, 13) has been classified among the 'literal or unintelligent versions,' in part because the text of the *codex Vaticanus*, corrected toward and very close to the MT, has usually been taken as base for the comparison. But a close look at the OG will lead to a corrected or slightly varied approach to this general opinion. The Old Greek of Judges is certainly a faithful translation of the Hebrew, but the translator was also interested in the fluidity and comprehension of the narrative. This feature can be seen in the small additions of subjects or complements (proper names and pronouns) to make the sense more explicit, to avoid ambiguity and clarify the narrative; the different ways of harmonizing the evidence along the diverse passages; the removal of problems, obscure or ambiguous passages. The Old Greek translation tries to facilitate the reading of the account and eliminates most of its problems and obscurities.

## 2. A Faithful Translation

To the first question, what has been maintained in the process of translation? the answer is very simple: a very high proportion of translation equivalences close to the MT, and, as a result, a fluent and meaningful narrative for the Greek reader. Moreover, in 16:13–14 the OG preserves two sentences omitted by *homoioteleuton* in the MT, as recognized by the textual critics and accepted in the apparatus of the BHS. In contrast with Josephus' account (Feldman 1998, esp. 461–489), or the rewriting of this passage in the *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* of Pseudo-Philo, the narrative of Samson's conception and birth in the OG is extremely close to the MT. However, in 13:25, while the Hebrew states: 'the spirit began to stir him (wm(p1), the Old Greek smooths the expression and translates: kai; h[rxato pneu'ma Kurivou sumporeuvesqai aujtw' /, 'and the spirit of the Lord began to walk with him.' Sumporeuvesqai is the only equivalence in the Septuagint for M(p. However, I do not find traces of confusion with the other Hebrew equivalents of sumporeuvesqai that may lead to suspect a different *Vorlage*. My own impression is that this peculiar translation belongs to the level of the interpretative exegesis. Traces of a smoothing translation can also be detected in the OG version of the spirit of Yahweh rushing on Samson (14:6,19 and 15:14). In the three passages the OG uses the verb kateuquvnein, 'to make straight towards,' while the *codex Vaticanus* corrects it

systematically to the verb *a{llesqai*, 'leap upon or against.' These translations reflect two interpretations of the Hebrew verb *xlc* (in *qal* 'to be strong, efficient, successful'), but the *codex Vaticanus* translates it more literally (*Symmachus* in 14:6 translates *ejfwvrhmhsen*, 'rush upon, attack'). It should be taken into account that *a{llesqai* evokes in the Hellenistic context the popular connection of the verb with an attack of a demon, *ejfiavlth*" being precisely the name for the demon of the nightmare (Gil 1969, 262–263).

The translator of Judges is a learned Jew and in a few cases he has recourse to the *figura etymologica* to maintain some Hebraisms or play on words of the original. One of the most difficult achievements, in ancient as well as in modern versions, consists in reflecting the sonority of the source language. In 14:12 the OG tries to reproduce the alliteration of the original and translates: *probalw' uJmi'n provblhma* for the Hebrew *hdyx Mkl )n-hdwx*), 'let me put a riddle to you.' But this is not the rule for many other puns in the Hebrew, as we shall see below. In 14:14 the OG does not maintain the alliteration of the Hebrew: *ejk tou' stovmato" ejsqivonto" ejxh'lgén brw'si"* for *lk)m )cy lk)hm*. Only the *codex Vaticanus*, revised according to the MT, tries to imitate the Hebrew device using two words of the same root: *Tiv brwto;n ejxh'lgén ejk bibrwvskonto"*; In the riddle of 14:18 the translator is able to create a *paronomasia* that is absent in its *Vorlage* with the end–result of a sonorous verse in Greek: *Eij mh; katedamavsatev mou th;n davmalin, oujk ajn eu{rete mou' to; provblhma*.<sup>4</sup>

In 15:13 it can be seen that the OG also maintains the two Hebraisms of the original (absolute infinitive plus finite verb of the same root to express a definitive assertion) by means of a recourse to the *figura etymologica* of the Greek: *desmw' / dhvsomevn se ... qanavtw/ de; ouj qanatwvsomevn se*. In this context, there is a typical addition of the Old Greek, represented here by the Antiochene text, tending to make the narrative explicit in connection with the plot of v. 12: *Oujci;] + ajpoktenou'men se*. This is the kind of clarifying insertion practised by the Greek translator in order to make the narrative fluent and

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<sup>4</sup> The rhetoric of the Septuagint has been scarcely analyzed; it is a promising field of research.

understandable, making the obscure points of the original Hebrew more comprehensible to the reader.<sup>5</sup>

To convey the accurate meaning of the original the translator may add a word, make explicit the implicit subject or complement by means of an appropriate pronoun or proper name. A series of passages in the Samson's cycle where this device occurs can be adduced: 13:11; 14:2,7,14,17; 15:1,5,7,8,12,13,18,20; 16:1,3,4,11,15,20 (addition, in general, of the name Samson or the pronoun for clarification of the narrative). The translation of Judges is literal but not slavish. The conclusions which can be drawn after a close examination of the OG are different from those after focusing on the text of *codices Vaticanus* and *Alexandrinus* alone. This is especially apparent in 15:2,3 where the OG is not as literal as *codex Vaticanus*, but modifies the sentence and is sensitive to the sequence of the narrative; or in 15:5, where the OG specifies the kind of destruction caused by Samson in the fields of the Philistines<sup>6</sup>; or in 15:7 with a free and clear translation<sup>7</sup> against an obscure text in Hebrew as well as in *codex Vaticanus*.<sup>8</sup>

In 15:8 the Old Greek translates: *kai; ejpavtaxen aujtou;" ejpi; mhrovn*, avoiding the idiom 'he struck them down hip and thigh,' a Hebraism restored by the *kaivge* revision of *codex Vaticanus*: *kai; ejpavtaxen aujtou;" knhvmhn ejpi; mhrovn*. Not to speak of the translation in 15:17 of Ramat-Lehi by *jAnaivresi" siagovno"*, where the translator has, in all probability, produced an exegetical meaningful translation in accordance with the preceding feat of Samson. Even the OG translation: *ejn tw'/ fobei'sqai aujtou;" aujtovn* for the Hebrew: *wtw) Mtw) rk*, 'when the people saw him' (14:11), may be due to an hermeneutical device suggested by the similarity of the consonants allowing him to read: *Mt) ryb*, in order to dramatize the story, although it is quite possible that this variant reading was already present in the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the Septuagint.

<sup>5</sup> To analyse the translation technique of Judges mainly on the basis of the *codices Vaticanus* and *Alexandrinus* as P. Harlé does, is misleading, since both uncials represent later stages of the text history and do not reflect the Old Greek (Harlé 1999, 35–38 and, for the passage in question, 212–213).

<sup>6</sup> *Kai; ejnepuvrisen tou;" stavcua" kai; ta; proteqerismevna ajpo; stoibh'" kai; e{w" eJstw'to"*, 'and he burned up the ears of corn and the first reaped, from the heaps of corn until the standing grain.'

<sup>7</sup> *Oujk ejdokhvsw, ajlla; th;n ejkdivkhsivn mou ejx eJno;" kai; eJkavstou uJmw'n poihevsumai*, 'I will not be content, but I will take my avenging from every one of you.'

<sup>8</sup> *o{ti ej mh;n ejkdikhvsw ejn uJmi'n kai; e[scaton kopavsw*, '[I swear] that I will grow weary until I have taken revenge on you.'

Two more additions can be pointed out that underline the concern of the translator to making the narrative fluid and smooth, facilitate the reading and eliminate the problems of the original. In 16:26 the Old Greek adds the fulfilment of the action: *kai; oJ pai'' ejpoihsen ou{tw''*, and in 16:30 the translator inserts: *tw'n ajperitmhvtnv touvtwn* after *tw'n ajllofuvlwn* in harmony with other parallel passages (14:3 and 15:18). Both additions can be identified as narrative devices of the translator.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, the OG translation of Judges can be characterized as literal but not slavish, since a sequence of small additions are inserted in Greek in order to make explicit the implicit subjects or complements of the original, or in order to clarify the sense of obscure or ambiguous passages. Apparently the original sense of Judges has been preserved to a high degree of faithfulness. But, 'dire en grec des choses juives,' to use the expression of E. Levinas in Dorival's biblical adaptation (Dorival 1996), is not as easy as it would appear at first sight. A chain of semantic shifts are produced in the target language due to the selection of certain words in Greek. This vocabulary provokes linguistic resonances on the readers that can only be perceived within the Greek linguistic system and culture. And, first and foremost, we come across a web of rhetorical and sonorous connotations in the source language that cannot be fully translated to the target language.

### 3. *The Limits of the Translation*

In this second stage my interest consists in emphasizing what has been lost in the process of translation. I will focus on a device that is usually overlooked in the analysis of the translation technique, the translation of the rhetorical figures and artistry of the original. Two characteristic passages of the Samson's cycle will suffice as an example. In 15:16 Samson, after killing a thousand Philistines with a fresh jawbone of an ass, utters this victory song: 'With the jawbone of the ass, ass upon asses, with the jawbone of the ass I have slain a thousand men.'

To perceive the rhythm, the number of similar sounds and alliteration of the original it is indispensable to read the verse aloud in Hebrew:

Mytrmx rwmx rwmxh yxlb  
 #y) Pl) ytykh rwmxh yxlb

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<sup>9</sup> See for Exodus the highlighting contribution of Sommer 2000, 43–60.

Now, let us see how this verse is reproduced in the Old Greek:  $\text{jEn siagovni o[nou ejxaleivfwn ejxhvleiya aujtouv", o\{ti ejn siagovni o[nou ajpevkteina cilivou" a[ndra"}$ . In fact, the result is not the same in spite of the translator's effort to reflect the alliteration using twice in the Greek a verb of the same root. The difficulty persists in the modern translations of this passage. Only a modern scholar very sensitive to the Hebrew poetry has been able, in my opinion, to translate into Spanish the sonorous effects of the source language: 'con la quijada de un burro, zurra que zurro, con la quijada de un burro maté a mil hombres' (Alonso Schökel & Mateos 1975, 362).

When the Philistines feast and rejoice before their god Dagon their victory over Samson (16:24), they sing another victory song or *epinikios*: 'Our god has given our enemy into our hand, the ravager of our country, who has killed many of us,' a song that in the source language, with the repetition of a single sound, sounds like a drum peal:

$\text{wnbyw) -t) wndyb wnyhl) Ntn}$   
 $\text{wnyllx-t) hbrh r\#)w wncr) byrxm t)w}$

The OG translation is literal and wise but the result becomes impoverished for the Greek reader as a simple reading aloud of the translation demonstrates:  $\text{Parevdwken oJ qeo;" hJmw'n to;n ejcgro;n hJmw'n ejn ceiri; hJmw'n, kai; to;n ejxerhmou'nta th;n gh'n hJmw'n, o\{sti" ejplhvqunen tou;" traumatica" hJmw'n}$ . The clumsy repetition of the pronoun  $\text{hJmw'n}$  and the lack of rhythm are not in comparison for the rhythm and inner rhyme of the Hebrew.

Wordplays abound in the Samson's story, puns on the Hebrew word for 'ass,' clever plays of sibilants, frequent initial *mems*, rare rhymes, etc. (Crenshaw 1992, 593). For example, Samson's answer to the solution of the riddle by the Philistines in the source language is a sentence composed by two hemistichs with inner rhyme, in which various rhetoric figures are concentrated such as *isocolon*, *homaeoptoton* and *homoioleuton*, 'If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have found out my riddle' (14:18):

$\text{ytdyx Mt)cm )l ytlg(b Mt\#rx )lw}$

The Old Greek is able to maintain the *paronomasia*, but the result cannot be compared with the sonorous strength of the original:  $\text{Eij mh; katedamavsatev}$

mou th;n davmalin, oujk a;n eu{retev mou to; provblhma. In this case it is a humanist, Benito Arias Montano, the editor of the Antwerp Polyglot, in his Commentary to the Book of Judges who best translates into Castilian the sonority of the original. The commentary is written in Latin but he has recourse to Castilian when he wants to transmit the Hebraisms, puns or poetics of the source language. His Castilian translation maintains the inner and final rhyme as well as the same number of syllables, producing a verse very close to the splendour of the original: 'Si con mi novilla non labraras, mi cosicosilla non fallaras' (Arias Montano 1592, 529). His Castilian translation has not been surpassed by any of the subsequent translations into Spanish to this day.

In spite of the faithfulness of the Greek translation of Judges, in a second stage I have emphasized the limits of the literal translation, the impossibility of transferring most of the puns, wordplays and sonorous connotations of the original to the target language.

### 3. *A Septuagint Reading of Samson's Account*

In a third stage I want to call attention to what has been transformed in the process of translation. The Samson's cycle is a good example of literal translation throughout most of the narrative, combined with a thorough interpretation in the last section of the account (16:6–21), Samson as prisoner of the Philistines. In this section the Old Greek transforms the scene of entertainment of the Hebrew ('called to make sport at a celebration honouring Dagon' 16:24) into a cruel scene of mockery. Through a series of subtle changes and small additions, the dramatization of the account increases in such a way that Samson becomes a victim of the Philistines, a kind of fool Samson *patiens*.

Let us look at some of the most significant changes in detail. In 16:7 Proto-Lucian and Josephus use to bind Samson the Greek word *klh'ma*, 'vine shoot,' instead of *neu'ron*, 'fresh sinews, tendons,' the reading of the majority text of the Septuagint, for the Hebrew *ṛṭy*. In vv. 11 and 12 the Old Greek introduces, as



Josephus does, the number eJptav for the new ropes to harmonize the account with vv. 7.13 and 19.<sup>10</sup>

Another harmonization with 16:9 is to be detected in the Greek addition of v. 14: kai; oujk ejgnwvsqh hJ ijscu;" aujtu'. Delilah nags Samson with her words day after day (Mymyh-lk, 16:16) according to the Hebrew and the *codex Vaticanus* (pavsa" ta;" hJmevra"), while the Old Greek reduces the action to one night (o{lhñ th;n nuvkta) increasing the dramatization. In 16:19 Delilah let him fall asleep not 'on her knees' (hykrb-l ()), but ajna; mevson tw'n gonavtwn, and she called the barber (to;n koureva), not a man (#y)), who shaves of his seven locks. The Hebrew: wtnw (l lxtw 'she began to weaken him,' is transformed in the Old Greek translation with a different subject and a passive into 'he began to weaken' (h[rxato tapeinou'sqai). In v. 21 the Philistines bound Samson with bronze shackles and the Old Greek adds 'and put him into prison' (kai; e[balon aujto;n ejn fulakh' /). In v. 24 we come across a prolepsis in the OG of the scene of v. 25, an anticipation that is lacking in the Hebrew: kai; ejkavlesan to;n Samyw;n ejk tou' desmwthrivou kai; ejnevpaizon aujtw' / ejnwvpion aujtw'n ('and they called Samson out of the prison and made fun of him before them'). This anticipation and repetition contributes to smooth the narrative, since otherwise, the way the Philistines can see Samson remains unexplained.<sup>11</sup>

However, it is in v. 25 where the changes become more drastic. According to the Hebrew the Philistines were feasting with merry hearts their triumph over Samson and said: 'call Samson, and let him entertain us (wnl -qx#yw). So they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them (Mhynpl qxcyw)'. In other words, in the Hebrew text it is Samson who makes a performance to entertain the audience. By contrast, the Old Greek changes the subject of the verb and through the use of a particular composite verb transforms the scene into one of mockery and torture: kai; ejkavlesan to;n Samyw;n ... kai; ejnevpaizon aujtw' //

<sup>10</sup> The lexical agreements between Josephus and the Antiochene text are particularly relevant in the Samson's cycle as emphasized by Harlé 1995, 129–133, esp. 132. Besides the mentioned agreements (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* V, 308 and 311), see also *Ant.* V, 293 (= Judg 14:18): pri;n hJ du'nai to;n h[lion, *Ant.* V, 314 (= Judg 16:25): o{pw" ejnubrivswsin aujtw' / para; to;n povton, and *Ant.* V, 315 (= Judg 16:26): to;n ceiragogou'nta pai'da peivqei.

<sup>11</sup> Interestingly enough, as in many other cases, this OG translation is not recorded by Harlé's versions, since only the texts of *codices Vaticanus* and *Alexandrinus* are translated (Harlé 1999, 222–223).

kai; ejrravpizon aujtovn ('they called Samson ... and mocked him and beat him'). This is in all probability the Old Greek translation of the passage, corrected in *codex Vaticanus* to e[paizen in singular and with a different subject, in accordance with the Hebrew. Kai; ejrravpizon aujtovn has been omitted by some cursive manuscripts of the group of *codex Vaticanus*, witnesses, as is well known, of the kaivge revision, to adapt the Greek to the MT.

The assumption of an interpretative translation in this verse is hard to avoid since it is confirmed by and connected with the same interpretation in v. 27, where the Philistines looked on while Samson performed (Nw#m# qwx#b). The Old Greek transforms the sentence in the same direction making Samson the victim, not the actor: ejmblevponte" ejmpaizovmenon to;n Samywn ('they were looking at Samson deceived or ridiculed'). Again the *codex Vaticanus*, following the Hebrew, corrects the expression to: oiJ gewrou'nte" ejn paignivai" Samywn ('they were looking at Samson's performances'). Josephus prefers to leave aside these scenes that may lessen the stature of the hero, but even so there is no doubt that he interprets the scene as a mockery<sup>12</sup>. Theodoret of Cyrus follows this Old Greek, in the Antiochene tradition, and uses the passive of ejpikertomevw, a verb with the sense of 'mocking' since the time of Homer.<sup>13</sup>

As M. Harl pointed out, it must be emphasized that ejmpaivzein is not an stereotyped equivalence for the Hebrew qx#. Consequently, the translation by this Greek verb probably responds to a specific interpretation of some biblical scenes by Hellenistic Judaism and reflects the main concerns of Judaism in this period (Harl 1992). I would add that the verb rJapivzein has no equivalent in biblical Hebrew, since it appears in 1 Esra 4:30, the story of the three young men of the bodyguard in the court of Darius, without Hebrew *Vorlage*, and in Hosea 11:4, where the underlying Hebrew is a *crux interpretum*. In short, the scene of entertainment in the Hebrew<sup>14</sup> is

<sup>12</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* V, 314–315: o{pw" ejnubrivswsin aujtw' / para; to;n povton ('in order to irritate him during the banquet'). The same can be said of Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* XLIII,7, where in a feast 'they called Samson to make fun of him' (*ut illuderent eum*), (Pseudo-Philon 1976, 296).

<sup>13</sup> Ouj pantelw" de; aujto;n katalevloipen oJ filoiktivrmwn Qeov", ajll j ijdw;n ejpikertomouvmenon, w[ /ktire (Fernández Marcos & Sáenz-Badillos 1979, 306,14).

<sup>14</sup> Confirmed by the active verbs of the Vulgate 16:25 (*luderet... ludebat*) and 16:27 (*ludentem*).

transformed in the Greek into a scene of mockery. Samson is no longer an actor but a victim of the Philistines.<sup>15</sup>

Interestingly enough, Ben Sira hardly mentions the judges between two long sections dedicated to Joshua and Samuel. It is surprising because Samson's exploits could surpass those of Heracles and other heroes of the Hellenistic world: 'The judges also, with their respective names, whose hearts did not fall into idolatry (in Hebrew: wbl )#n )l r#) lk, "all who did not become arrogant") and who did not turn away from the Lord, may their memory be blessed' (Ben Sira 46:11). Probably, from the point of view of Ben Sira's piety, the judges were not edifying persons 'nor followed the Lord' (46:10).<sup>16</sup>

The translator of Judges in the first part of the 2nd century BCE, no doubt reflects several aspects of the climate of contemporary Hellenistic Judaism. Traces of the Seleucid persecution may well be present in the translation. More specifically, the experience of the Jews in the Hellenistic period may have been a contributory factor in the new interpretation of Samson as a victim of the gentiles, the Philistines. T. Rajak has emphasized the figure of the hero-victim exalted in the accounts of martyrdom described in 2, 3 and 4 Maccabees, especially 2 Macc 6–7 carried out by the hand of a tyrant ruler (Rajak 2001; Tomes 2007).<sup>17</sup> Scenes of victory followed by the procession of triumph or pomphv, where the defeated enemies were exposed to humiliation and mockeries could often be contemplated in pictures of contemporary life. Cruel scenes of mockery against the Jews are described by Philo in his *Against Flaccum* 34–41 and 67–73 (*Philon d'Alexandrie* 1967, 69–73; Fernández Marcos 2007). The parody of king Agripa which is performed in the Alexandrian Gymnasium by the Greeks who recur to a homeless madman, the fool Carabas, disguised in the inappropriate attire for a king, is particularly sarcastic. Agripa is described by Philo as a victim of public

<sup>15</sup> It is plausible that some descriptions of Jesus' passion in the Gospels are inspired by the passion of Samson according to the Old Greek. The verb ejmpaivzein is used in the passion's announcement and fulfilment of the three synoptic Gospels (see Mtt 20:19: paradwvsousin aujto;n toi'" e[qnesin eij" to; ejmpai' xai; see also Mtt 27:29,31,41 and parallels). The verb rJapivzein appears in Mtt 26:67 (Boling, *Judges* 1975, 220).

Resemblances of Samson with Christ occurred to some interpreters, but the Fathers prefer to see the blind Samson as a *typos* of the sinner, submitted to the mockeries and trickeries of Satan.

<sup>16</sup> In contrast, more attention is paid to the judges in the Letter to the Hebrews 11:32–40, where Samson's exploits are mentioned or alluded to. See, besides the name in v. 32, ejdunamwvqhsan ajpo; ajsqeneiva" (v. 34); ejmpaigmw'n ... pei'ran e[labon (v. 36), and perhaps 13:2 as possible allusion to Judg 13:3ff.

<sup>17</sup> Samson shares several features of the three types of heroism, as warrior, martyr and suicide: 'So those he killed at his dead were more than those he had killed during his life', Judg 16:30.

mockeries of the children and young people in the Alexandrian Gymnasium. The two verbs of the Old Greek for Samson's mockery, *ejmpaivzein* and *rJapivzein*, are lacking, but Philo uses terms belonging to the same semantic field: *cleuavzonte* "to;n basileva kai; skwvmmata suneivronte" ('treating the king scornfully and stringing together disparaging jokes,' § 34) ... *i{na mh; parevch/ toi'" katakertomou'sin ajformh;n eij" u{brin tw'n beltiovwn* ('in order to not supply a pretext to those who railed him violently for irritating the best people,' § 40). The context is that of the mime and street theatre (*wJ" ejn qeatrikoi'" mivmoi"*, § 38), where a Jew is made fun of in public by the pagan people (*ta; e[qnh*). The Hellenistic Jews attribute these mockeries to the enemies, the pagans, the Philistines, the nations. It is a form of torture practised by the pagans and especially feared of, as can be perceived in 2 Macc 6–7.

Nowadays in the studies of the Septuagint an increasing interest is arising on the date, social context and cultural background of the different translators. If this reasoning is correct, the context of the Seleucid persecution could be a fitting framework for the translation of Judges as reflected in the Old Greek description of Samson defeated and derided in public by the Philistines.

#### 4. *Conclusions*

Some concluding remarks concerning the disputed question of different *Vorlage* versus different interpretation may be fitting. Throughout the Samson's cycle traces of a different Hebrew *Vorlage* have been detected: the omission in MT by *homoioteleuton* of two half verses (16:13–14), a sporadic different reading of the MT. But in general it should be emphasized that the Old Greek of Judges is a faithful translation of a *Vorlage* which is only slightly different from that of MT. In a few cases, it is evident that the translator had recourse to the Aramaic or the postbiblical meaning of some Hebrew words: the translation of *#+n* by *ejkrivptein* in 15:9; of *hyr+* by *ejrrimnevnhn* in 15:15; of *#tkm* by *trau'ma* in the Hexaplaric recension of 15:19 (Harlé 1999; Joosten 2000 and 2003). But it must be also emphasized that in the Samson's cycle the Old Greek stands out as the *first interpretation* of the proto-Masoretic Text. The Hebrew has been faithfully translated as far as the structure and possibilities of the Greek language allow. Most of the

changes introduced belong to the process of translation and the concern of the translator/scribe to convey a meaningful text that could be read and understood by the Hellenistic readers. Moreover, in chapter 16 the translator, through harmonization and repetition of a set of variant readings, becomes a narrator or creative author and transform the entertainment scene of the original into a scene of mockery. Samson the hero is depicted as the fool victim and toy in the hands of the Philistines. Through these subtle changes the translator is probably reflecting the concerns of the times and the anxieties of the Jewish population throughout the Seleucid persecution.

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#### NEW ABBREVIATIONS:

- AR*     *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte*  
*BI*     *Biblical Interpretation*  
*BHS*   *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*  
*CFC*   *Cuadernos de Filología Clásica*  
*REG*   *Revue des Études Grecques*

## FONTS:

Hebrew: SPTiberian

Greek: SuperGreek